

driving the punches comprises moving the punches into the fiber-cement panel to form openings having a first dimension at the first side of the panel and a second dimension larger than the first dimension at the second side of the panel.

A<sup>2</sup>  
55. (NEW) The method of claim 49 wherein:  
a clearance between the holes in the support plate and the punches is approximately between 0.18-0.39 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches into the fiber-cement panel to form openings having a first dimension at the first side of the panel and a second dimension larger than the first dimension at the second side of the panel.

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REMARKS

Claims 1-37 have not been amended, and claims 38-55 have been added to the application. The new claims do not include any new matter. Applicants respectfully request consideration of this application and its early allowance.

Respectfully submitted,  
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**APPENDIX – SPECIFICATION**  
**MARKED TO SHOW CHANGES**

On page 1 prior to “TECHNICAL FIELD” please insert the following:

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of, and claims the benefit of, U.S. Patent Application No. 09/415,088 (Attorney Docket No. 31957.8007US), entitled METHODS AND APPARATUS FOR MANUFACTURING FIBER-CEMENT SOFFITS WITH AIR VENTS” and filed October 8, 1999. United States Patent Application No. 09/415,088 is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

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APPENDIX-CLAIMS  
MARKED TO SHOW CHANGES

38. (NEW) A method of fabricating a fiber-cement soffit, comprising:  
placing a fiber-cement panel between a punch assembly and a support  
assembly so that a first side of the panel faces the punch assembly and a second side of  
the panel faces the support assembly, the punch assembly having a punch plate and a  
plurality of punches coupled to the punch plate, and the support assembly having a  
support plate with a plurality of holes; and  
driving the punches through at least a portion of the fiber-cement panel at  
least substantially simultaneously to form a plurality of openings in the fiber-cement  
panel that have a first dimension at the first side of the panel and a second dimension at  
the second side of the panel larger than the first dimension.

39. (NEW) The method of claim 38 wherein driving the punches  
comprises passing the punches along a punch stroke path to an intermediate depth of the  
fiber-cement panel without passing the punches completely through the panel and  
ejecting plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

40. (NEW) The method of claim 38 wherein driving the punches  
comprises passing the punches along a stroke path completely through the fiber-cement  
panel and ejecting the plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

41. (NEW) The method of claim 38 wherein:  
the punches are arranged in an array and have a diameter of approximately  
0.11-0.25 inch, and the holes are arranged in a corresponding array and have a diameter  
of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch-hole clearance between the  
punches and the holes of approximately 0.04-0.07 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches along a punch stroke into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

42. (NEW) A method of fabricating fiber-cement soffit, comprising:  
placing a fiber-cement panel between a punch assembly and a support assembly so that a first side of the panel faces the punch assembly and a second side of the panel faces the support assembly, the punch assembly having a punch plate and a plurality of punches having a first cross-sectional dimension coupled to the punch plate, and the support assembly having a support plate with a plurality of holes having a second cross-sectional dimension larger than the first cross-sectional dimension of the punches;  
and

driving the punches through at least a portion of the fiber-cement panel at least substantially simultaneously to form a plurality of openings in the fiber-cement panel that have the first dimension of the punches at the first side of the panel and the second dimension of the holes at the second side of the panel.

43. (NEW) The method of claim 42 wherein driving the punches comprises passing the punches along a punch stroke path to an intermediate depth of the fiber-cement panel without passing the punches completely through the panel and ejecting plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

44. (NEW) The method of claim 42 wherein driving the punches comprises passing the punches along a stroke path completely through the fiber-cement panel and ejecting the plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

45. (NEW) The method of claim 42 wherein:  
the punches are arranged in an array and have a diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch, and the holes are arranged in a corresponding array and have a diameter

of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch-hole clearance between the punches and the holes of approximately 0.04-0.07 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches along a punch stroke into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

46. (NEW) The method of claim 42 wherein:

a clearance between the holes in the support plate and the punches is approximately between 4%-30% of the second dimension of the holes; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches along a punch stroke into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

47. (NEW) The method of claim 42 wherein:

a clearance between the holes in the support plate and the punches is approximately between 4%-40% of a thickness of the fiber-cement panel; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches along a punch stroke into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

48. (NEW) The method of claim 42 wherein:

a clearance between the holes in the support plate and the punches is approximately between 0.18-0.39 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches along a punch stroke into the fiber-cement panel until the punches eject plugs from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

49. (NEW) A method of fabricating fiber-cement soffit, comprising:

placing a fiber-cement panel between a punch assembly and a support assembly so that a first side of the panel faces the punch assembly and a second side of the panel faces the support assembly, the punch assembly having a punch plate and a plurality of punches having a first cross-sectional dimension coupled to the punch plate, and the support assembly having a support plate with a plurality of holes having a second cross-sectional dimension larger than the first cross-sectional dimension of the punches;

driving the punches along a punch stroke through at least a portion of the fiber-cement panel at least substantially simultaneously to form a plurality of openings in the fiber-cement panel that have the first dimension of the punches at the first side of the panel and the second dimension of the holes at the second side of the panel; and

ejecting plugs of fiber-cement from the panel in the direction of the punch stroke.

50. (NEW) The method of claim 49 wherein driving the punches comprises passing the punches into the fiber-cement panel to an intermediate depth without passing the punches completely through the panel.

51. (NEW) The method of claim 49 wherein driving the punches comprises passing the punches completely through the panel.

52. (NEW) The method of claim 49 wherein:  
the punches are arranged in an array and have a diameter of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch, and the holes are arranged in a corresponding array and have a diameter of approximately 0.18-0.39 inch to provide a radial punch-hole clearance between the punches and the holes of approximately 0.04-0.07 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches into the fiber-cement panel to form openings having a dimension at the first side of the panel of approximately 0.11-0.25 inch.

53. (NEW) The method of claim 49 wherein:

a clearance between the holes in the support plate and the punches is approximately between 4%-30% of the second dimension of the holes; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches into the fiber-cement panel to form openings having a first dimension at the first side of the panel and a second dimension larger than the first dimension at the second side of the panel.

54. (NEW) The method of claim 49 wherein:

a clearance between the holes in the support plate and the punches is approximately between 4%-40% of a thickness of the fiber-cement panel; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches into the fiber-cement panel to form openings having a first dimension at the first side of the panel and a second dimension larger than the first dimension at the second side of the panel.

55. (NEW) The method of claim 49 wherein:

a clearance between the holes in the support plate and the punches is approximately between 0.18-0.39 inch; and

driving the punches comprises moving the punches into the fiber-cement panel to form openings having a first dimension at the first side of the panel and a second dimension larger than the first dimension at the second side of the panel.